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**Haverhill Fatal Fire Accidental**  
***Home Oxygen Fueled the Fire***

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Haverhill Public Safety Commissioner Alan R. Denaro said their joint investigation into the cause of the March 7, 2012 fatal fire at 477 Washington Street has determined the fire was accidental and started on the mattress. The two most probable causes are the improper disposal of smoking materials or an aged heating pad. The fire took the life of 87-year old Phyllis Lamot and injured her daughter and son-in-law who lived in the apartment. The cause of death has not yet been determined by the medical examiner pending conclusion of the autopsy test results.

Coan said, "The presence of medical oxygen in the home fueled the rapid spread of the fire. Bringing oxygen into the home brings new fire risks and extreme caution must be used. There can never be smoking in a home where oxygen is used as the danger is enormous."

Commissioner Denaro said, "The Haverhill Fire Department did an excellent job in fighting this very difficult and fast moving fire. Many people are unaware that an oxygen enriched environment like this apartment, puts firefighters at greater risk because their protective gear will fail at a lower temperature than usual."

The fire was jointly investigated by members of the Haverhill Fire and Police Departments, State Police assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal and to District Attorney Jonathan Blodgett's Office. The Code Compliance and Enforcement Unit in the Department of Fire Services assisted.

Coan said, "This tragic fire is an opportunity to remind people of our statewide campaign on the fire dangers home oxygen poses. This includes educating the medical community, families, caregivers and patients. Simply shutting of the oxygen is not enough to ensure safety around heat sources like smoking materials. Oxygen soaks into bedding, clothes, hair, furniture and the air, creating an oxygen-enriched environment." For more information go to [www.mass.gov/DFS](http://www.mass.gov/DFS) and click on *Fire Safety Topics*, and then *Home Oxygen Safety*.

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